

HOUSING AND SEGREGATION OF MIGRANTS: ANTWERP IN BELGIUM

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1 Background: Migration to Belgium

After the Second World War, Belgium signed several bilateral agreements with other countries in order to organise the recruitment of migrant workers – first in its coal mining sector and, later, in other sectors. The first agreement was concluded with Italy in 1946. This was followed by other agreements with Greece and Spain in the 1950s, with Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey in the 1960s, and with Algeria, Portugal, and the then Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1970s. The majority of migrants came from these countries, but also from neighboring countries such as France and The Netherlands. In 1974, like other European countries, Belgium decided to stop the immigration of workers. However, data on immigration during the subsequent decades show that, despite this decision, immigrants were still arriving in Belgium. Overall, six main patterns of migration became evident: mobility of EU citizens, asylum applications, mobility of foreign students, migration of highly skilled workers, irregular migration, and family reunion (Gsir, Martiniello & Wets 2003).

By 2004, Belgium's foreign population constituted 8.3% of the total population, which is slightly lower than the proportion in the 1990s, when this population was around 9%. However, this figure did not include foreigners residing irregularly in Belgium or Belgians of foreign origin. Thus, the immigrant population and its offspring are in fact higher.

The foreign population is spread unevenly around the country. In 2004, about 26.3% of the foreign population was located in the Brussels-Capital Region, while 9.1% were residing in Wallonia and 4.8% in Flanders. In the latter region, the foreign population is particularly concentrated in the provinces of Limbourg and Antwerp in the western part of the country. In Wallonia, on the other hand, it is mainly concentrated in the old industrial provinces of Liège in the north and Hainaut in the west (Martiniello & Rea 2003). Most of the foreigners are EU nationals, constituting 66% of the foreign population at the end of 2004 – mainly Dutch, French, Italians, and

Spaniards. The number of Poles coming to Belgium has also been increasing since 1990. Other foreigners who are widely represented are Moroccans (81,279 persons) followed by Turks (39,885). Nonetheless, these populations have diminished considerably since the change of nationality law in 2000, which facilitated applications for Belgian nationality.

From a gender perspective, women represented less than 50% of foreign population between 1990 and 2004, though they constitute about 51.3% of the overall Belgian population. Nevertheless, the distribution of women among the foreigners varies. For example, women constitute a higher proportion (58%) of the Greek population living in Belgium but a considerably lower proportion (42.6%) of the Algerian population. Regarding the age distribution of foreigners, the highest share of people in this group is between 25 and 50 years (Direction générale emploi et marché du travail 2006).

National Policy Context

The federated entities of Belgium – that is, the country's regions and communities – are responsible for most of the issues linked to integration – such as education, health, housing, and, to some extent, employment. Flanders and Wallonia developed their own approach to the integration of migrants. For instance, Flanders developed multicultural policies inspired by the Dutch model, whereas Wallonia was influenced more by the French Republican model of assimilation.

Since the 1980s, the Flemish government has encouraged the involvement of migrants' associations in its integration policy. Moreover, in 1996, it passed a decree defining a policy for ethnic-cultural minorities. This minorities' policy is threefold: First, it encourages the emancipation of legal foreign residents (so-called *allochtones*). Second, it promotes the integration of newcomers. And third, it provides emergency support for irregular migrants. Since 2003, the Flemish government has developed its own integration policy for newcomers in line with the concept of "citizenisation" (*inburgering*). As of April 2004, it has put in place a compulsory integration program for all newcomers arriving in Flanders. This program includes the provision of Dutch language and civic courses as well as job-orientation measures. Furthermore, in 2004 Flanders appointed a "minister for citizenisation", who has the task of shifting the region's minorities' policy toward a diversity policy.

In Wallonia, the government opted for general anti-exclusion policies instead of a proper integration policy. In the mid-1990s, it passed a decree on integration, but without precisely defining the concept. The task was entrusted to six regional integration centers that were recognized by the decree. At a later stage, the Walloon government adopted measures linked to cultural diversity, such as a "positive discrimination" decree in the field of education – in other words, a kind of affirmative action.

The Brussels-Capital Region sought to develop its own approach in this respect, which is largely inspired by the two models developed in the North and South of the country.

At the federal level, integration was stimulated mainly by access to Belgian nationality. Consequently, the Belgian nationality code has been modified several times

and is currently one of the more liberal codes in Europe (Gsir, Martiniello & Wets 2003). In 2004, another step forward was taken by granting non-EU nationals the right to vote at local elections, although they still do not have the right of enfranchisement (rights of citizenship). Prior registration on electoral lists is mandatory, whereas for Belgians voting is compulsory. Nevertheless, civic and political rights are henceforth a further means of integration in Belgium.

2 Profile of Antwerp

2.1 Demographic Structure

Antwerp, the largest city in Flanders, is situated between France, Germany, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (UK). It is located at the centre of Europe's most densely populated area. Antwerp's population totaled 470,044 persons as of January 2006. In terms of its age profile, the population of Antwerp is growing old. Although the size of the population has been dropping for a long time now, it has actually risen since 2001 due to positive birth and relocation balances. The latter is mostly due to the influx of new inhabitants from outside the EU. About 13% of the city's population consists of foreigners, of whom 8% are non-EU nationals. The main nationalities are Moroccan, Dutch, and Turkish. Other foreign nationals typically come from the other EU Member States, or from former Yugoslavia, Russia, the Congo, China, and India. In a globalised world, international tensions are also felt at local level, as is evident in Antwerp, which is home to a large community of both Jews and Muslims. In recent years, general unease about the country's multicultural society has sometimes occurred in the city.

Antwerp's history of migration reflects the Belgian migration history; however, it also has some specific features of its own, mainly because of the presence of the harbor and the activities related to it. The first migrants were recruited in the coalmining industry, and they arrived mainly in Wallonia, where the coalfields were situated. As soon as the Belgian state allowed migrants to work in other sectors, like industry and services, migrants from other countries such as Greece and Spain, and later from Morocco and Turkey, became distributed throughout all other major Belgian cities – including Brussels, but also in Flemish cities such as Antwerp with its port or Ghent in eastern Flanders. A higher proportion of Moroccans than Turks went to Antwerp (Kesteloot 2006). After the EU enlargement of 1985, migrant workers from Portugal also arrived in Antwerp, although a larger proportion thereof went to Brussels (ibid.). Furthermore, Antwerp has for centuries attracted a significant proportion of Jews, a characteristic typical of the municipal migration history. After Belgium's independence, Jewish migrants arrived from Central and Eastern Europe, and their community developed progressively. Before the Second World War, more than half of the 100,000 Jews in Belgium lived in the city. Today, the orthodox Jewish community of Antwerp is one of the largest in Europe, comprising about 15,000 persons.

Some 13.3% of Antwerp's inhabitants are registered as foreigners in the population register. However, these percentages do not fully reflect the ethnic diversity of the city, as a large number of inhabitants of foreign origin have assumed Belgian nationality in the past few decades. Overall, the number of inhabitants with a migratory background – that is, foreign nationals or Belgian nationals born with a foreign nationality – represents 26.6% of Antwerp's population. This percentage has been rising since 2000. Among them, persons of Moroccan origin constitute the largest group, followed by those of Dutch, Turkish, Polish, former Yugoslavian, Indian, Congolese, Jewish, Russian, and Western European origins. Some 18.4% of the inhabitants with a migratory background are from non-EU countries. The age pyramid of Belgian nationals in Antwerp is fairly flat at the top, which indicates that this group contains many older persons. In contrast, the age pyramid for persons with a migratory background is narrow at the top and broad at the base, the latter corresponding to the 20–24-year age group. There are relatively few persons under 20 years of age among EU nationals.

2.2 *Housing Stock and Housing Market*

If we view the city territory as a whole, it can be seen that there are more owners than tenants in Antwerp (unreturned surveys not included). The majority of people who rent are private tenants. A significant minority of people live in public housing. Yet it should be noted that the ratio of owners to tenants is obviously not the same in all districts, nor in all neighbourhoods of a district.

Table 3: **Number of owners and tenants in Antwerp's housing market**

House owner and tenants	Number
House owners	104,426
Tenants total	86,733
Private tenants	56,540
Tenants in public housing or public institutions	20,940
Tenants of private companies	9,253
<i>Ratio of house owners to tenants</i>	<i>1.20</i>

Source: Housing City Service.

At the district level, the ratio of owners to tenants in the district of Antwerp is negative: There are some 41,035 tenants in this district, compared with only 27,333 home owners. This ratio is only marginally positive in the district of Borgerhout (8,639 owners versus 7,548 tenants), but in all of the other districts, the proportion of home owners is higher. At neighbourhood level, the situation varies greatly depending on the location. It is often said that the current tenants are people who have financial difficulties.

According to a socioeconomic survey conducted in 2001, there are approximately 216,738 dwellings in Antwerp. The majority of these are flats/apartments and studio flats (58%), while single-family dwellings account for 38% of the total. Owner-occupied dwellings constitute approximately 48% of the dwellings, while privately rented accommodation accounts for 30% of the total and public housing units for over 11% of the dwellings. Vacant or uncategorized dwellings make up the remaining share (ca. 11%).

Antwerp has a large stock of public housing, although it is not evenly spread throughout the region. In 1998, the city had a total of 23,813 social dwellings. By the end of 2004, this figure had risen to 26,103 dwellings. These dwellings mainly comprise studio flats, regular flats/apartments, and single-family dwellings with between one and four bedrooms. Dwellings with five bedrooms are fairly exceptional. Altogether, there are some 2,467 single-family dwellings and 23,636 flats/apartments. Public housing is clearly not evenly distributed, as just 11.6% of households in Antwerp live in such housing. In some districts, this percentage is higher: For instance, in the district of Antwerp, the figure amounts to 20%. Moreover, compared with the overall average for Flanders of 6%, the proportion of public housing units in Antwerp is relatively high. This explains why politicians are sometimes reticent about increasing this share.

According to city experts, there is no obvious correlation between housing quality in general and neighbourhoods considered to be problematic. In Antwerp's postal zone 2060, for instance, housing quality is not as bad as elsewhere; in fact, there are some areas with high residential potential, such as the planned zone along the Leien area in Antwerp. Peripheral high-rise estates in Antwerp often offer much better quality of housing than inner-city homes of similar price and type. Housing quality or affordability are generally not the main driving force behind area-based policies. Officially, there has even been a shift in policy focus toward areas with potential – for example, for gentrification (redevelopment following an influx of more affluent people) or urban development – rather than problem areas. In practice, however, problems, albeit not necessarily housing problems, remain an important issue for politicians, and neighbourhoods that combine both have the greatest chance of receiving attention.

2.3 Distribution of Migrants in Housing

According to the city experts, residents with a migration background – particularly former “guest workers” – used to be restricted to privately rented housing, often of modest or poor quality. However, in the 1980s, a significant number of these residents became homeowners, often under precarious circumstances. In the 1990s, because of more strict application procedures (reduction of “clientelism”) for access to housing – for instance, in terms of an upper limit regarding household income – more recent immigrants such as asylum seekers on allowance as well as the established population with a migration background on low incomes, moved into public housing relatively rapidly.

The “Atlas note 2006–2008”, a policy document issued by the City Integration Service, describes the housing situation among migrants as follows:

“Although there are no recent figures, the housing situation of many ethnic minorities is inadequate. They are often in a bad position with respect to comfort and quality. The share of owners is lower among ethnic minorities, although they are catching up. The property acquisition witnessed an increase from the beginning of the 1980s, when more and more Turks (and to a lesser degree Moroccans) proceeded to purchase often cheap houses of poor quality. In professional literature, this group is indicated by the term ‘emergency buyers’. They bought their own house to leave a bad rental situation or because they were discriminated against in the private rental market. Now, many years later, the housing quality of the emergency buyers is relatively good. Step by step, they have renovated their houses. The property acquisition by ethnic minorities remains nonetheless smaller than the acquisition of real estate by non-ethnic minorities. ... Over the last few decades, urban exodus and migration have thoroughly changed the composition of the population and the social web in neighbourhoods of special attention. Those who could afford it went to live in the outskirts or outside the city – initially non-ethnic minority groups and later on also the well-off ethnic minority groups. Their place was taken by new immigrants. This creates transit neighbourhoods with high percentages of non-Dutch-speaking newcomers, high-migrant schools, and community problems. This also leads to segregation and intergenerational transfer of backwardness”.

According to city experts, it seems that vulnerable groups of migrants are now being pushed into the neighbourhoods along the periphery of the city. This mechanism of exclusion is being coupled with a process of gentrification, which can be seen in neighbourhoods such as Borgerhout. A large proportion of ethnic minorities also live in public housing in the city. By overemphasizing new population groups, strong changes are emerging in cohabitation and this form of housing. It also explains the political willingness to address the issue of ethnic minorities’ knowledge of Dutch.

Given that few public housing units have more than four bedrooms, that more apartments are being offered than one-family houses, and that legal criteria regarding occupation have to be taken into account, it is understandable that large families do not find it easy to apply for public housing – although this still occurs to some extent among some ethnic minorities. Even within the private rental market, ethnic minorities encounter problems – not only because of the prices demanded for large houses, but also because owners or leasers (according to some jurisprudence) may prefer a family with few children over a family with many children. As Kusters (2003) explains: “A family with five children will cause more wear and tear to a house than a family with two children who are willing to pay the same rent for the same house”. Such discretion does not constitute an illegal action according to case law.

An analysis of the size of each population group – that is, Belgians, other EU nationals and non-EU nationals – shows which districts and neighbourhoods have a higher concentration of foreign nationals. Table 4 shows that the districts of Antwerp and Borgerhout have a high concentration of foreigners, particularly non-EU nation-

als. EU nationals other than Belgians are mainly concentrated in the district of Antwerp. All other districts show a lower score in this respect than the citywide score. The lowest scores are registered in Berendrecht, Ekeren, and Zandvliet, with Berchem, Deurne, and Hoboken having the highest percentage of ethnic minorities.

Table 4: **Proportion of residents in Antwerp, by population group and district**

District	Belgians		EU nationals		Non-EU nationals		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
City of Antwerp	404,772	86.7	24,086	5.2%	37,933	8.1	466,791
Unknown			3		2		5
Antwerp	134,306	79.7	13,394	7.9	20,798	12.3	168,498
Berchem	35,948	89.4	1,923	4.8	2,320	5.8	40,191
Berendrecht	5,756	96.9	131	2.2	56	0.9	5,943
Borgerhout	34,526	82.2	2,094	5.0	5,404	12.9	42,024
Deurne	63,283	90.6	2,438	3.5	4,123	5.9	69,844
Ekeren	21,491	96.3	553	2.5	268	1.2	22,312
Hoboken	31,962	92.2	888	2.6	1,813	5.2	34,663
Merksem	38,396	93.2	1,242	3.0	1,560	3.8	41,198
Wilrijk	35,631	92.6	1,264	3.3	1,573	4.1	38,468
Zandvliet	3,473	95.3	156	4.3	16	0.4	3,645

Source: City of Antwerp, Districts- en loketwerking, Statistics Office, October 2006, Berwerkingen door Stad Antwerpen, Social Planning Databank. Notes: Districts- en loketwerking = District and office operation, Berwerkingen door Stad Antwerpen = Revisions by city of Antwerp.

At the neighbourhood level, the various ethnic minority groups are distributed as follows: The areas around “the Ring” in Antwerp have a particularly high percentage of ethnic minorities, most strongly represented in Antwerp North, Oud-Borgerhout, the Diamond neighbourhood, and the public housing neighbourhoods (Kiel, Europark/Linkeroever, and Luchtbal), where they account for more than 40% of the population. In contrast, a low percentage of ethnic minorities can be found in the neighbourhoods of Bezali, Ekeren, and the southern part of Wilrijk.

EU nationals tend to live in the housing blocks in and around the Old Town (*Oude Binnenstad*) and Het Eilandje. On the other hand, non-EU nationals are mainly concentrated in the 19th-century belt and the public housing neighbourhoods, making up over 40% of the population in Antwerp North and in most parts of Oud-Borgerhout and Het Kiel.

Non-EU Europeans – including those from the former Warsaw Pact countries and Russia – are most strongly concentrated in Antwerp North, the area around the main

railway station and the area extending from there toward Oud-Borgerhout and Deurne North. Inhabitants of Moroccan origin are highly concentrated in Oud-Borgerhout and the area extending from there toward Antwerp North and the blocks around Provinciestraat. The percentage of ethnic Moroccans is also high in Het Kiel; moreover, residents from this group are well represented in Deurne North, Luchtbal, Merksem Dokske, and parts of Hoboken. The Turkish community is mainly based in Zuid, Kiel (and the adjacent part of Hoboken), Antwerp North, and Oud Berchem. Inhabitants of Asian origin, excluding Turks, are highly concentrated in the Diamond neighbourhood; such inhabitants mainly comprise Israelis and Indians, who are well represented in the diamond trade. There is a fairly high concentration of Africans (not including Moroccans) in the public housing neighbourhoods of Linkeroever and Luchtbal.

High concentrations of ethnic minorities are found in both district and intra-district neighbourhoods. Thus, while diversity is concentrated in some parts of the city, it is also expanding into other areas. Generally speaking, the percentage of migrants is highest in the city centre, specifically in the districts of Antwerp and Borgerhout, where they constitute almost 40% of the population. A comparison between 2000 and 2005 findings shows that a significant percentage of migrants can also be found outside the ring area. The city centre therefore has as many migrants as all neighbourhoods. According to the city experts, residents with a migration background are predominantly concentrated within the contours of the 19th-century city, although recently there has been some movement to the interbellum districts (areas developed in the period between the two world wars, 1918–1939). Newly arriving immigrants still end up in the areas of the city with the least attractive housing stock, although from the 1960s onwards, the dominant reception area has changed, from Antwerpen-Zuid in the 1960s to Borgerhout in the 1970s–1980s to Antwerp North in the 1990s–2000s. Recent signs of gentrification in Antwerp North (postal zone 2060) signal that this area will also be succeeded by another in due time. Consequently, Antwerp North is today experiencing the greatest diversity in terms of the largest number of nationalities. In Borgerhout, residents with an immigrant background are mainly of Moroccan descent. Elsewhere, the orthodox Jewish neighbourhood between Central Station and the city park in Antwerp expands toward the south along the railway to Berchem. Antwerpen-Zuid has ceased to be an important ethnic neighbourhood, with the exception of a small, established Turkish community. Berchem (within the city walls) retains a mixed Turkish-Moroccan population that has nevertheless stabilized. Residents of mainly Moroccan descent, and to a lesser extent Turks, are spreading toward the interbellum districts, resulting in a lower segregation index than was the case 10 years ago. Overall, segregation indexes for foreigners are lower than before.

Some of the more affluent immigrants live in upper-class areas within the city limits – for instance, the Middelheim Park area and its surroundings have become a popular residential area for the Indian community in recent years. However, most of these immigrants – mainly Dutch people – live in the suburban greenbelt in relatively large estates to the northeast of the city (Kalmthout, Kapellen, Brasschaat, Schoten, Schilde).

The rest of the suburban area and the main part of the post-war extensions within the administrative borders of Antwerp have a very homogeneous population of Belgian origin.

2.4 *Housing Policy and Segregation-Related Measurements*

The Council of State explains the application of the right to decent housing, as described in the constitution, as encouraging the government “to make every endeavour to ensure that everyone can live in a house which with respect to safety, quality and size is adjusted to the social and economic situation of the society”. The Flemish Housing Act also includes such an obligation for the Flemish government to promote the availability of good-quality and affordable housing, in a decent environment and with sufficient security. The act also stipulates a rehousing obligation for occupants of premises that have been declared unfit for habitation, except for people with a precarious status and those without legal residence documents. In addition, a dispute has arisen over whether this obligation implies an obligation for local authorities to guarantee a certain result or only to perform to the best of its abilities. Moreover, in the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980, an extra article was added that explicitly declares “slumlord” practices and multiple renting of the same premises to be a punishable offence.

In his third book on Antwerp, Patrick Janssens, Antwerp’s mayor since July 2003, gives his vision of housing policy in one of the book’s chapters (Janssens 2006). First, he considers that “town planning is so important for the future of the city that we can’t leave it to chance. This is a plea for authorities that steer more, not for authorities that suffocate everything” (ibid.). Furthermore, Janssens highlights the following:

“We do not only have to increase the supply of good houses. The city (housing) policy in the next few years has to fulfil a second big ambition: it has to counter the increasing social segregation in the city. ... We have to break this segregation. We have to strive for a well-balanced population structure in the various neighbourhoods and therefore a varied housing offer (ibid.: 37f.). ... The recipe contains three main ingredients. One: in Antwerp we have to forget about the exclusive attention to social rental houses, and we also have to offer social owner-occupied housing. Two: we have to open our public housing blocks not only to people with the lowest (replacement) income; this would lead to a better mix of the population groups. Three: the public housing companies and the private sector have to cooperate more often” (ibid.: 43).

2.4.1 **Improving Access to Housing for Migrants**

The City Fund (*Stedenfonds*) is a Flemish instrument that finances actions concerning cities’ social policy (2003–2007), including the area of urban housing. With respect to the Housing Service, this mainly includes social housing projects. On the one hand, the city works on an operational social housing plan in order to increase the

number of social housing units, but according to the principles of small-scale projects, infill development, and social mix. At the same time, the city seeks to increase the quality of social housing units through structured consultation between social housing companies and their tenants.

The Federal Urban Policy – the City Contract (*Federaal Grootstedenbeleid – Stadscontract*) – is an agreement between the city of Antwerp and the Belgian state within the context of Urban Policy (2005–2007). In general, this contract focuses on “liveable neighbourhoods in liveable cities”. It comprises five strategic objectives, one of which concerns a better social housing supply. The Housing Service focuses on its efforts to prevent vacant dwellings and dilapidation. The extension of the Slum Property Inspection Team and the conversion of the Housing Quality Division to the Urban Housing Inspection unit fit in with this project.

The Federal Urban Policy – Housing Contract (*Federaal Grootstedenbeleid – Huinvestingscontract*) – is another agreement between the city and the Belgian state (2005–2007). In this context, the federal government has four main objectives: (1) to increase the number of quality rental properties, which are adjusted to occupants’ present and future needs, (2) to facilitate the acquisition of property for families with a low- or medium-sized income and for young people, (3) to reinforce urban policy in the fight against slum landlords, vacant dwellings, and unhealthy houses, and (4) to set up transversal actions for the reintegration of deprived groups, by giving them access to housing. At the same time, the federal government stipulated that the available means could be used only for investments and not for operational or personnel costs. Under this contract, the Housing Service is responsible for the realisation of three main projects: (1) entering into redevelopment contracts for 369 houses, (2) realising renovation contracts for 100 houses, and (3) creating 22 places in transit houses.

In order to reverse the selective urban exodus and to increase the strength and attractiveness of Antwerp, in 2002 the city established AG Vespa, the autonomous city company for real estate and city projects in Antwerp. The company was intended to be a powerful instrument to realise and execute the city’s development policy. The city council and the board of the mayor and aldermen elaborated this policy and set out the main political lines. AG Vespa takes care of the programming of city projects and monitors the city projects supported by public-private cooperation or those aimed at a commercial return. At the same time, the company handles the real-estate transactions for the city, develops its own patrimony and manages the city properties. The funds management is also entrusted to this company.

AG Vespa also takes care of the execution of the local sites and premises policy. This policy focuses mainly on rolling fund purchases, including the acquisition and renovation of vacant and slum sites in deprived areas, along with the introduction of renovated premises to the sales or rental market. The company also promotes projects that aim to increase the visibility and attractiveness of the street image. Moreover, it is involved in strategic purchases – such as the acquisition or destination/redestination of strategic sites and premises to enable the desired development of certain parts of the

city. It is not necessary for the company to generate an immediate financial return. The emphasis is rather on making the most of the opportunities that enable or accelerate the development of a particular part of the city. Finally, since its creation, the autonomous city company has built up and renovated many slum dwellings, selling them off as high-quality family dwellings.

In another initiative – the “Schipperkwartier” (sailors’ quarter) renovation and monitoring contract – the Housing Service tried to improve housing quality in the well-defined Schipperkwartier area in Antwerp. Issues such as the quality of the houses and the environment are tackled. Special attention is also paid to maintaining the current mix of occupants in this neighbourhood. Among its aims, the project seeks to encourage a strategic city renewal process, improve the quality of housing, offer an additional instrument as part of the city’s quality policy with respect to the private rental market, improve the street image, initiate a community integration project that provides for affordable housing in a multicultural neighbourhood and for a high-quality housing project with a broad social mix. The goal of the project is to renovate approximately 100 houses, 50% of which will be put on the private rental market at a socially acceptable price. It is likely that this target will be met.

The renovation and monitoring contract is an agreement between homeowners in the neighbourhood and the city of Antwerp. If owners carry out renovation works to improve the quality of their property, and if they put the property on the rental market at a socially acceptable price, the city will pay for 50% of the renovation costs. The budget for this project comes from the Urban Policy funds of the federal government. These funds are used to finance the wages of a project architect and the renovation costs for about 100 houses. The project is monitored daily by a project architect, who handles applications presented by owners, gives them advice before and during the building process, checks the houses, and reports to the working group in charge of the Schipperkwartier housing policy. This working group is composed of members of various city services, such as those involved in monument care, city planning, social affairs, housing inspection, and prostitution policy. It also considers the applications.

The success of the project can probably be explained by the fact that it fits into a broader town planning project for the Schipperkwartier area. This main project was initiated at the request of the occupants and after thorough analyses of the needs and potential of the neighbourhood, with considerable attention being paid to the occupants’ participation. Because this project is embedded in a broader initiative, it is directly aimed at specific requests from the neighbourhood. Moreover, the desired number of approved applications for a renovation and monitoring contract is reached each year.

2.4.2 City Neighbourhood Dialogue

The City Neighbourhood Dialogue initiative is a neighbourhood-level mechanism for two-way (top-down and bottom-up) dialogue and consultation between citizens and management (city and district) in Antwerp. The initiative seeks to channel com-

munication from management to citizens and vice versa, broaden the basis for policy decisions or good governance without loss of time, examine the authority of districts and city management in terms of their dependence on higher powers, scale projects according to the particular target group and area (street, neighbourhood, district), and apply an optimal methodology and communication mix (oral and written). The general aim is to increase residents' involvement in local administration and to create a broader basis for policy decisions among the target group.

Dialogue and consultation are organised with the 470,000 inhabitants of Antwerp's nine districts and 42 neighbourhoods. The City Neighbourhood Dialogue also organises external dialogue with groups in the neighbourhood, such as socio-cultural organizations, residents groups, and city services. The initiative does not work with standard concepts, but is rather scaled down as follows: first, to address street, neighbourhood, and district (geographic) issues; second, to identify the needs of the target group and stakeholders; and third, to take into account preconditions such as time and budget. The project is based on two-way communication: on the one hand, it aims to inform citizen-stakeholders (residents, businesses, visitors) about policy decisions and implications (top-down); on the other hand, it seeks to gather the opinions of citizens and determine their significance for policy (bottom-up).

The City Neighbourhood Dialogue initiative develops proposals through communication campaigns that it considers desirable and feasible. An optimal communication mix of campaigns and channels is sought, encompassing oral, written, and electronic forms. The proposal is discussed with the relevant service and submitted to the competent authorities, who must approve it. The authorities decide on whether communication should take place and whether dialogue is desirable. Approved communication is organised by the City Neighbourhood Dialogue.

2.4.3 Neighbourhood Action Service

The Neighbourhood Action Service is part of Antwerp city's social affairs operations. In association with other city services – including culture, sports, and integration groups along with a few subsidised private organizations, the most important of which is aimed at building a society – the Neighbourhood Action Service pursues a policy seeking to promote social cohesion.

The service was recently assigned the task of coordinating the efforts of these external partners, although the service is first and foremost an active partner. Six departments of the Neighbourhood Action Service are active in the neighbourhoods every day, as follows:

- Opsinoren offers residents various opportunities to improve life in their neighbourhoods. The initiative supports volunteers involved in a range of activities, for example, those who help to keep the city clean, fund street parties, assist in shutting off streets to traffic so that children can play safely, and encourage clubs and associations to play their part in keeping the city clean.

- Some 50 neighbourhood supervisors help to create the conditions for coexistence by maintaining a daily presence on the streets and through their willingness to listen to residents. They encourage a culture in which residents feel responsible for where they live.

- Three meeting centers provide low-threshold meeting opportunities for residents. The meeting centers welcome all visitors and offer neighbourhood residents a varied program in association with local clubs and associations. In the coming years, more meeting centers are to be established; the objective is to have 15 centers in the whole city.

- The city-square development department offers children and young adults opportunities to take part in sports and games at various squares.

- Four canvassing programs have been introduced to accompany large infrastructure works in the city, with the aim of improving life in the neighbourhoods, together with clubs, associations, and resident groups.

- Seven projects have been launched in different neighbourhoods to improve community relations.

The Neighbourhood Action Service works throughout the city, although special attention is reserved for neighbourhoods experiencing coexistence issues, sometimes due to large infrastructure works. These are typically neighbourhoods characterised by extensive ethno-cultural diversity and with large numbers of people living in poverty. The projects, city square development, neighbourhood supervision, meeting centers, and canvassing programs are concentrated in Antwerp North, the area around the main railway station, Schipperskwartier, and the parts of the city built in the 1800s (Deurne West, Kiel, Oud-Berchem, Oud-Borgerhout and Zuid).

2.4.4 City Integral Safety Service

Antwerp city's safety policy is entrusted to various players, particularly the police service, which has a legally defined remit, and the City Integral Safety Service.

The police policy regarding neighbourhood safety has two main objectives: to tackle crime and to adopt an integrated approach to local safety. This policy is based on the principles of community policing, as stipulated under the Local and Federal Police (Organisation) Act of 7 December 1998. The first objective – tackling crime – is a key aim to tackling high-priority crime in Antwerp, particularly in neighbourhoods with significant levels of crime. This aspect of policing is mainly reactive, but a more proactive approach is now also being employed. The main goal is to battle the types of crime that are considered a priority for Antwerp and are covered in the National and the Federal Governmental Safety Plan. Legally speaking, the priorities are set by the Local Safety Council, which consists of the mayor, the public prosecutor, the chief of police, and the regional federal police commissioner. Although the chief of police directs and monitors police policy based on crime statistics, the Local Safety Council evaluates this approach.

As outlined, the second main objective in this respect is adopting an integrated approach to local safety. High-crime neighbourhoods are often, albeit not always, areas that are challenged by problems such as poverty, nuisance behaviour, integration problems, and social deprivation. These aspects are important factors in the integrative or joint approach developed for these neighbourhoods. It is important to communicate with the people who live in these areas in order to help them become more self-reliant and to involve them in a joint approach. The police service takes part in several community initiatives to communicate social or safety problems, together with the city of Antwerp. This increases the potential for success in such a joint approach. For the police service, increased community orientation represents a new challenge.

The city of Antwerp's Integral Safety Service has also placed "neighbourhood directors" in various neighbourhoods as part of the Neighbourhood Direction project. Their job is to develop actions and campaigns that promote a positive perception of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood director initiates dialogue with the neighbourhood associations and official bodies to identify solutions to nuisance and quality-of-life problems.

3 Key Challenges

Antwerp is the largest city in Flanders, with about 470,000 inhabitants in 2006. Some 13% of the city's population consists of foreigners, of whom 8% are non-EU nationals. Moreover, 26.6% of Antwerp's inhabitants have a migration background, mostly originating from a non-EU country. Moroccans constitute the largest group of foreigners in Antwerp, followed by the Dutch, Turks, Poles, persons from former Yugoslavia, Indians, Congolese, Russians and Western Europeans. The city also has an indigenous Jewish community comprising approximately 15,000 persons.

The city's economy is dominated by a large services sector. It also has an important diamond centre and is home to Europe's second largest port. Both sectors provide thousands of jobs. At 15.9%, the unemployment rate in the city is higher than the overall average for Flanders. Almost a quarter of all unemployed persons have a non-EU migration background, many of them originating from the Maghreb region in North Africa and from Turkey. The number of persons receiving welfare benefit is also higher among non-EU nationals.

Antwerp's municipal housing policy aims to sustain and even increase the diversity within the city. This diversity is not so much a matter of ethnicity, but rather of age, socioeconomic status, family status, level of professional qualification, and other aspects. One priority target of Antwerp's housing policy is to attract young families with two salaries and young children to the city. It also aims to increase the city's overall housing supply and to improve the present housing stock. The city applies the concept of housing quality in its approach, which refers both to the physical aspects of the housing stock as well as to social aspects such as safe neighbourhoods and peace-

ful coexistence. Finally, the city policy seeks to reduce social segregation by achieving a favourable social mix in every neighbourhood. This objective refers primarily to social criteria and less so to ethnic or migration related criteria.

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